

The Sport Studies Graduate Program at The University of Tennessee

Thank you for your interest in the Sport Studies program at the University of Tennessee. We are part of the Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies in the College of Education, Health and Human Sciences on the flagship campus at Knoxville, Tennessee's oldest and largest public university, a land-grant institution that holds the Carnegie Foundation doctoral/research-extensive classification.

Focus of the Program

The University of Tennessee's graduate program in Sport Studies derives its primary intellectual identity from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, history, and philosophy. The program draws upon perspectives from motor learning and control, feminist theory, ethics, global studies and other specialized forms of inquiry in critically examining all levels of competitive sport and other organized movement activities.

We teach students to forge connections between theoretical considerations and potential solutions to a wide variety of real-world challenges. We are committed to the principles of diversity and social justice and to the provision of positive sport and movement experiences for all people. We strive for excellence in research, teaching, practice, and service. Our goal is to provide superior and innovative programs of study that will enable our students to become effective and imaginative professionals, scholars, and citizens.

The **Motor Behavior** specialization focuses on identifying and understanding the factors that mediate motor performance, the learning of motor skills, and the control of goal-directed actions. A second line of research addresses expert performance in sports. Research is conducted to test hypotheses, develop theory-based knowledge that applies to practical settings, and solve practical problems related to goal-directed actions and skills.

The **Sport Psychology** specialization focuses on performance enhancement with sport and physical activity participants (including imagery, goal-setting, self-talk, and focusing attention) as well as social/psychological issues in sport and physical activity such as gender/race/class identity, moral and ethical development, leadership, cohesion, aggression, team-building, and the use of ergogenic aids in sport

The **Sport Sociology** concentration (Master of Science) and specialization (Ph.D.) is concerned with socio-cultural issues in sport and the way in which sport interacts with social aspects of life, with a focus on inclusion and diversity. This area also explores the social institutions of media, politics, religion, and education in relation to sport as well as the historical development of sport.

Degrees Available

- M.S. in **Sport Studies**, with a concentration in **Sport Psychology**
- M.S. in **Sport Studies**, with a concentration in **Sport Sociology**
- Ph.D. in **Exercise and Sport Sciences**, with a concentration in **Sport Studies** and a departmental specialization in **Motor Behavior**
- Ph.D. in **Exercise and Sport Sciences**, with a concentration in **Sport Studies** and a departmental specialization in **Sport Psychology**
- Ph.D. in **Exercise and Sport Sciences**, with a concentration in **Sport Studies** and a departmental specialization in **Sport Sociology**

Curriculum

Most master's students pursue our non-thesis option, which consists of 30 hours of coursework and a written comprehensive examination at the conclusion of their program. Those who plan to continue their education at the Ph.D. level and pursue careers as faculty in higher education tend to pursue the thesis option, which consists of 24 hours of coursework and a 6-hour thesis. On average approximately 30 students comprise the masters program each year and approximately 4 to 5 of those complete a master's thesis.

All doctoral students in Sport Studies tailor their programs to prepare them for their respective chosen careers and take coursework from a variety of disciplines, including Counseling Psychology, Counselor Education, Cultural Studies, Psychology, Sociology, Statistics, and Women's Studies. All are encouraged to become competent in both quantitative and qualitative research methods and complete at least one research project prior to their dissertation. They may attempt the latter on an independent basis or in collaboration with a faculty member or other students. Students in sport psychology usually have opportunities to develop their performance consulting skills with local athletes at the youth sport, high school, or recreational level.

“What can I do with a degree in Sport Studies from UT?”

Sport Psychology

The majority of graduates of the sport psychology masters concentration obtain positions in teaching, coaching, athletic training, and strength and conditioning when they finish their degrees. The remaining students apply for Ph.D. programs after completing the master's degree requirements and aspire to careers as faculty members at the university level. The majority of doctorate students obtain university faculty positions after completing their degrees. However, some obtain positions as full-time mental training consultants in university athletic departments or privately owned sport psychology businesses.

Sport Sociology

The majority of graduates of the sport sociology masters concentration continue their education at the Ph.D. level. However, some work in teaching/coaching positions in interscholastic and intercollegiate sports. The majority of doctorate students pursue careers as faculty in higher education after completing their degree. However, some have obtained positions outside of academia, for example in diversity services for major corporations.

Sport Studies Faculty

- ❖ **Dr. Joy T. DeSensi, Professor and Associate Dean of The Graduate School** (Ed.D., University of North Carolina at Greensboro) teaches graduate courses in Sport Sociology and Sport Management. Her primary scholarly interests include the sociocultural issues of sport, including all aspects of diversity and ethics in sport management. She is author of *Ethics and Morality in Sport Management (3rd ed)* along with Danny Rosenberg and has authored numerous scholarly articles and book chapters in her field. Editorships of scholarly journals include *Quest*, the *Women, in Physical Activity and Sport Journal*, and the *Journal of Sport Management*. She has served as President of the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, the National Association for Kinesiology and Physical Education in Higher Education, the Southern Academy of Women in Physical Activity, Sport, and Health, and is a Founding Member of the North American Society for Sport Management. Awards include being named a Chancellor's Professor at UTK, the Chancellor's Award for Research and Creative Achievements, the Angie Warren Perkins Award for Administration, and the UT National Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award. She also received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

- ❖ **Dr. Lars Dzikus, Assistant Professor** (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in sport studies including Socio-Cultural Foundations of Sport and Leisure, Sociological Aspects of Sport, and Social Theories of Sport. His primary research interests lie in globalization and the diffusion of American sports, particularly the history of American football in Germany in its broader socio-cultural context. Dr. Dzikus has regularly assisted German professional soccer teams visiting the United States, including Hamburg SV, Bayer 04 Leverkusen, and the women's national team. Dr. Dzikus is a member of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) and the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS).

- ❖ **Dr. Jeffrey T. Fairbrother, Assistant Professor** (Ph.D., Florida State University) is the Director of the Motor Behavior Laboratory and teaches *Principles of Movement Control and Skill Learning (SS 290)*, *Motor Behavior and Skill Acquisition (SS 534)*, and *Expert Performance in Sports (SS 536)*. His research focuses on practice structure, expertise and aging, repeated testing effects, task switching in motor skills, and other factors related to motor performance and learning. He has served as an invited reviewer for *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, *Quest*, *Brain & Cognition*, *Experimental Aging Research*, and the *Journal of Swimming Research*. He is an active member of the *North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity* and served as program chair for Motor Learning & Control during their recent conference in Denver.

- ❖ **Dr. Leslee A. Fisher, Associate Professor** (Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley), teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in sport and exercise psychology. Primary research interests include the integration of cultural studies and sport psychology; gender identity and sport subcultures; moral development, ethics, and orientation in sport, and positive deviance in sport (e.g., over-conformity to norms that include such behaviors as disordered eating, exercise addiction and the use of anabolic steroids). Dr. Fisher is currently the secretary-treasurer of the Association for

Applied Sport Psychology. Prior to that, she served as Chair of the Continuing Education Committee for AASP. She holds state counseling licensure and national certification.

- ❖ **Dr. Joe Whitney, Adjunct Professor** (Ph.D., University of Tennessee) is the Director of Mental Training for the Department of Athletics at the University of Tennessee. He is a graduate of the Ph.D. program at Tennessee and serves as an adjunct professor in our department. Dr. Whitney coordinates all mental training services, supervises graduate students who work at the mental training center, and teaches courses in the theory and practice of sport psychology.
- ❖ **Dr. Craig Wrisberg, Professor** (Ph.D., Michigan) has been on the faculty since 1977. He teaches courses in applied sport psychology and research development. His primary research interests deal with the role of cognitive strategies in sport performance and the impact of sport participation on the life quality of athletes. He is author of the book *Skill Instruction for Coaches (2007, Human Kinetics)* and co-author with Richard Schmidt of the best selling textbook, *Motor Learning and Performance (4th ed., 2008, Human Kinetics)*. Since January 1, 1992, Dr. Wrisberg has also served the athletic department as a sport psychology consultant. He is past president of the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity and the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.

How to Apply

The application process has two parts. You must apply to the Department of Exercise, Sport, & Leisure Studies and the University of Tennessee Graduate School.

You apply to the Department through Margy Wirtz-Henry, our Admissions Coordinator. You should submit the following (links to the forms are available on our website):

- The ESLS Departmental Application, including the Departmental Assistantship Application if you want to be considered for a teaching assistantship in our Physical Education Activity Program (PEAP)
- Your Resume
- Three Ratings Forms (University of Tennessee's recommendation forms)—Two of these should be completed for you by professors who are familiar with your work and the third can be completed by either an academic or an employment reference.

You must also apply to the University of Tennessee Graduate School through the Office of Graduate and International Admissions. This involves the submission of the following:

- The Graduate Application for Admissions
- \$35 application fee
- Official academic transcripts sent directly from all your post-secondary academic institutions
- GRE scores (PhD students only)
- TOEFL scores (Test of English as a Foreign Language; only required if you are not a native English speaker)
- Financial documentation (International Students only; contact the Graduate and International Admissions Office for more information)

- International Students have certain deadlines by which applications **must** be received and then the admissions process completed.

Who is admitted?

Each year we usually admit 1-3 PhD students into each specialization (Motor Behavior, Sport Psychology, & Sport Sociology) from a pool of 25-30 applicants and 25-35 MS students total in the sport studies concentration from a pool of 40-50 applicants.

Admissions decisions are made on a number of criteria:

- Ph.D. applicants need to have completed a master's degree to enter our program. Most students admitted to the PhD program have completed a master's thesis.
- PhD students are usually brought in by a specific professor because of similarity of research interests.
- For Ph.D. students, we look for a GRE score at or above the 50th percentile for the verbal and quantitative portions and a score of 4.5 or higher on the writing portion. (Master's candidates are not required to take the GRE, but scores will be considered using the same criteria if they are submitted.)
- M.S. students must have a minimum overall GPA of 3.0 or above in their undergraduate work to be considered (or at least in the senior year); PhD candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their graduate work and preferably also in their undergraduate work.
- We then look at the applicant's writing ability and answers to questions on our application form (research interests, for one) in considering folks who might be a good fit for our program.
- Ratings forms (our version of letters of recommendation) are also considered.

Admissions Deadlines

Departmental admissions are done on a rolling basis for M.S. students so qualified applicants can be admitted as soon as **all application materials** (i.e., graduate school, application materials, application forms, ratings forms/reference letters, etc.) are in. Most Ph.D. students are admitted for and begin their programs in the fall semester. **For priority consideration**, as well as consideration for departmental assistantships, all materials should be sent to the department (or in the case of the graduate school application materials, to the graduate school) by December 31st of the preceding year. Admissions decisions for Ph.D. students are made in mid-February.

IMPORTANT: Individuals interested in the PhD program must apply to and be accepted by **both** the Department (specific degree program) and the University (The Graduate School). To ensure full consideration, both of these applications should be completed prior to the December 31st deadline. International PhD applicants should begin the application process well in advance in order to allow adequate time for processing of their papers.

Useful Links

- Sport Studies Program <http://web.utk.edu/%7Esals/grad/SS.html>
- Graduate Admissions <http://admissions.utk.edu/graduate/>
- About Knoxville <http://www.utk.edu/knoxville/>
- Financial Aid <http://web.utk.edu/~finaid/>

- Center for International Education <http://web.utk.edu/~globe/>
- Admission Guide for International Students
<http://admissions.utk.edu/graduate/forms/intl.admission.guide.pdf>

Need More Information or Have Questions?

If you are interested in learning more about the application process or the program, please contact our Admissions Coordinator, Margy Wirtz-Henry, at (865) 974-7154 or mwirtz@utk.edu.

Thank you for your interest in the University of Tennessee. Best wishes in your search for a graduate program that meets your needs.